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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [IR](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: PRT WASIT: GEN CARDON DISCUSSES SECURITY WITH
SADRIST PC MEMBER

REF: A. A. BAGHDAD 1455
[1](#)B. B. BAGHDAD 1383
[1](#)C. C. BAGHDAD 1029
[1](#)D. D. BAGHDAD 748
[1](#)E. E. BAGHDAD 367

Classified By: PRT Team Leader Rob Jones for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (U) This is a PRT Wasit reporting cable.

[1](#)2. (S//REL TO USA, ACGU) Summary. On May 14, Sadrism Trend (ST) Provincial Council (PC) member Ahmed Ebrah, a regular PRT contact (REF A), met for the first time with 3ID DCG-S, BG Cardon. BG Cardon emphasized that security must be present for economic progress and explained that while the United States recognizes that the Sadrism Movement has a legitimate political wing, militants who reject political discussion in favor of violence will continue to be pursued by Coalition Forces (CF) and the Government of Iraq (GOI). Ebrah reiterated themes he has mentioned in prior meetings such as: his understanding and support of a continued CF role in Iraq; his assertion that many attacks on CF and Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) are committed by illegitimate "criminals" and are unfairly attributed to Sadrists; his personal rejection of violence; his view of cleavages within the ST; and his belief that CF is being drawn into ST rivalries and inadvertently targeting moderate OMS officials. Ebrah also accused a special IP unit of arresting low-level criminals from Sadrism neighborhoods and threatening and beating them to elicit false confessions against Ebrah and other ST political officials. As in previous encounters, Ebrah argued that the economic situation is a key driver of instability in Wasit. In a brief discussion about elections prior to BG Cardon's entrance, Ebrah told PRT that there are "no independents" in Iraq and that he expects the deadline for registering may be delayed by two months due to the lack of an election law. End summary.

[1](#)3. (S//REL TO USA, ACGU) BG Cardon, accompanied by incoming 10th Mountain Division DCG-S and CDR 214 Fires BDE, opened by emphasizing that the objective of CF is to be as balanced as possible and noting recent CF efforts to demonstrate goodwill with detainee releases and humanitarian assistance efforts (REF B). He stressed the need for security as a precondition for economic growth, pointing out that "Americans tend to approach employment through a private business perspective, because that not only generates the jobs but the best paying jobs," and underscoring that CF "are looking for opportunities to reduce unemployment."

Ebrah: CF Support of ISF is "Essential"

[1](#)4. (S//REL TO USA, ACGU) Ebrah thanked BG Cardon for "your understanding that there is a difference between the Sadrism Trend, Special Groups (SG) and Jaysh al Mahdi (JAM)." He said the "problem is we are accused of things we didn't do," and asserted that JAM in Wasit does not take orders from the Office of the Martyr Sadr (OMS). Ebrah said local OMS director Sadiq al Musaiw had been an opponent of the violence in Al Kut in March; that JAM didn't take part in the attacks;

and that SG units do not take orders from Muqtada al Sadr (REF C). (Comment: This assertion is not supported by intelligence as most CF and ISF reporting indicates mainstream JAM was involved in the March attacks. End Comment.) Ebrah said past ISF weakness had allowed SGs to assert control in Al Kut and declared that "the arming and training of ISF by CF is essential; we are waiting for the ISF to behave like American forces," for example, by supporting development projects. BG Cardon replied that there was evidence of persons within OMS supporting JAM and SGs. He also said "we are aware of the challenges with the ISF and are working hard to correct them," noting that more CF training teams have been recently formed to support IP and IA units in Wasit. Pressing Ebrah, he stated that the "challenge with the Special Groups is finding them, because so many were formally JAM, they can return to JAM for protection," adding, "we need to drive the wedge between the two sides." Ebrah said that the "SGs are more harmful than JAM" and contended that "financial support for SGs does not come from OMS." There is a clear distinction between the groups that follow orders and those that do not, noted BG Cardon, reminding Ebrah that CF will continue to be relentless in the pursuit of those who do not honor the agreement.

Sadrists Want Peace

15. (S//REL TO USA, ACGU) Ebrah illustrated his point that "the true Sadrists want peace" by describing action taken by Muqtada to relieve an anti-CF/ISF OMS official from his Friday sermon duties. According to Ebrah, when Sayyid Muqtada heard that Sayyid Mudhafar al Mousawi, a religious

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sheikh in the Al Kut OMS office, was preaching an anti-CF/ISF message, he "fired the sheikh and replaced him with another."

Ebrah then complained that SG elements had made use of the CF to detain a moderate OMS official. He alleged that CF arrested and are holding Sayyid Yahiyah al Baghdadi, "a man of peace," due to false information from a SG informant.

16. (S//REL TO USA, ACGU) BG Cardon said that he understood the role of the young Shi'a men who felt that they had to protect Shi'a neighborhoods after the bombing of the Al Askari Mosque in February 2006 which incited a wave of sectarian violence. BG Cardon explained that these men now need to recognize the change in the security situation and their new role. Stressing security again, BG Cardon said that with stability "there will be opportunity for training and employment," noting that "there are billions of dollars at the national government that can be focused on increasing the economic opportunities for the population." He agreed with Ebrah that there has "been a lot of misunderstanding between CF and the ST, but I think we have enough to move forward in some matters of common interest." For his part, Ebrah declared that "I am ready to be part of the solution." BG Cardon said "it is very difficult for us to speak with the Sadrism Trend," adding that "in Wasit we can continue the use of the PRT as a conduit." BG Cardon then offered that "We need to separate the SG from JAM. We could start with the worst Special Group that we both agree is bad for Iraq, and we can both work against that." Ebrah was noncommittal, but agreed to continue to communicate regularly with the PRT, and, in a follow-up call on May 15, said he was ready to meet again with senior OMS officials if he could be assured his personal security concerns were met.

Ebrah's Personal Security Concerns

17. (S//REL TO USA, ACGU) Expanding on a theme he has raised in previous meetings, Ebrah described a state of internal turmoil within the ST, in which the "educated people" were under attack. "We are fighting corruption and trying to reform from within the movement," Ebrah said, but we are "being attacked" by both SG from the inside and ISF from the outside. Ebrah said elements of SG are against "reformers

and "have attacked our houses." (Note: In spring 2007, ST PC member Jawad Maqtoof's house was attacked by JAM elements who objected to his statements supporting CF. In the incident, Maktoof's young son was killed. His wife was injured and subsequently treated by a US Special Forces ODA. End note.) Ebrah also complained without elaborating that Al Kut SWAT (KSWAT) and the IP investigation unit unfairly targeted legitimate ST officials, and alleged that there are "detainees making the allegations and fabricating lies that are affecting my reputation." Ebrah professed that "Americans have more justice than Iraqis," and said that he was ready to be judged by Americans and appealed for assistance.

No Clear Decision on Elections Yet

¶8. (S//REL TO USA, ACGU) At the beginning of the meeting, PRT Governance officer and IPAO discussed elections with Ebrah. He was initially reluctant, noting without elaboration that "My spirit is preoccupied and I am not able to focus on these matters right now." (Note: Later, he made it clear that it was his preoccupation was due to his concern that he would be detained by KSWAT. End note.) Ebrah said he believes the deadline for registering for elections may be extended, perhaps by two months, because the elections law has not yet been finalized. Asked whether there had been any progress in registering Sadrist candidates, Ebrah said that he had spoken with Sadrist COR member Imam Jalal who indicated that her colleagues are waiting for the resolution of the agreement between the UAI and the Sadrists before proceeding because of Prime Minister Maliki's statement that parties with militias should not be allowed to stand for office. "Many of the parties are being friendly with the Sadrists," said Ebrah, "to get their support in case they do not run."

¶9. (S//REL TO USA, ACGU) Asked about the prospects for Wasit independents, Ebrah declared, flatly, "There are no independents who will run. In the last election, many people ran as independents but they were Badr or ISCI." It is difficult for independents to run, Ebrah explained "because you need someone to support you. You need tribal support, for votes and for protection from threats." By way of illustration, Ebrah mentioned that he is from the al Abd tribe. This backing helped him secure the removal, Ebrah asserted, of five Directors General who were not serving the people. Asked to expand on his statement in a previous meeting that Badr-ISCI had been establishing "shell" independent parties which would be filled with friendly candidates, Ebrah said only that "Today is not the day to discuss this." He observed that "freedom and democracy are

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everywhere in Iraq, but the majority has misunderstood these principles."

¶10. (S//REL TO USA, ACGU) Comment: Ebrah was visibly appreciative that BG Cardon made a clear distinction between Sadrist Trend, SG and JAM, and reiterated his opinion that SGs pose a serious risk to legitimate Sadrist politicians and moderates. The timing for the meeting was superb, as the DCG reinforced themes that the PRT has been communicating for the last few months. The presence of BG Cardon also emphasized CF leadership's interest in, and added weight to, earlier meetings between Ebrah and the PRT. We expect the key points of the meeting from Ebrah's perspective will be communicated back to Najaf, as he has indicated would occur after past meetings. The meeting reinforces our assessment of Ebrah as a moderate, who, despite ties to JAM, may be willing to provide (1) information on the situation in the ST and, (2) details, possibly evolving to actionable intelligence, on ISCI/Badr and Iranian influence in Wasit. End comment.

¶11. (U) BG Cardon has cleared this cable.
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